

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16), a member of the House Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, today issued the following statement in response to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's announcement that the United States would shift to a non-combat role in Afghanistan by 2013:

"I respectfully urge our Commander in Chief to reconsider this premature announcement and base any changes in our Afghanistan strategy on the situation on the ground. While our troops have made progress in stabilizing areas of Afghanistan, the Obama Administration has not presented any assessment that suggests our military commanders believe the Afghan Security Forces are prepared to maintain that stability.

"We saw in Iraq in 2006, when the country nearly degenerated into civil war, what happens when we move our troops before local security forces are prepared to take over. Before publicly telegraphing a withdrawal date, we need clear evidence that the Afghan Security Forces are prepared for this transition – they aren't now, and there's no crystal ball to ensure us they will be a year from now."

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